

WASHINGTON TIMES
8 November 1985**TOM BRADEN**6 **Can any of them earn a living outside 'the firm'?**

My guess is that in the case of Vitaly Yurchenko, the Russians took us in; that they planted Mr. Yurchenko with orders to come home whenever he thought he'd learned everything he was going to learn. And that's what he did.

It's a guess. The guess is based largely upon the fact that the CIA's director, William Casey, was excited by Mr. Yurchenko's original defection, proud to have the new man aboard, and certain he was the genuine article.

Upon that and upon the assumption that if Mr. Yurchenko had indeed experienced a change of heart and mind, he would, despite homesickness or disillusionment, have been afraid to go back to his embassy. That warning he said he received from his handlers — "If you go back to the Soviet Union, prison and death are waiting for you" — seems sensible.

The story he told about being kept for three months under the influence of drugs is less so. Upon at least one occasion in the past, the CIA did sadly mistreat a defector, keeping him isolated, questioning him around the clock, reportedly drugging him.

But that was in the '60s. It led to an intra-agency fight, to several investigations, and to the eventual

ousting of the then-chief of counterintelligence, James J. Angleton. The ruckus is remembered as a very bad time. It is unlikely that anyone now aboard would risk its repetition.

Moreover, if a CIA source is telling the truth when he says that Mr. Yurchenko was seated at a Washington restaurant in the company of two CIA agents, excused himself, said he'd be right back, then walked out into the street and to the Soviet Embassy, his handlers would appear to have been remarkably benign.

Hard-liners maintain that CIA's counterintelligence has been weakened.

That is what will cause trouble in the CIA and in the Reagan administration. Back in 1980, Mr. Reagan's transition team was made up of hard-liners who complained that the agency's counterintelligence services had been weakened. In part, their concern stemmed from former CIA director William Colby's dismissal of Mr. Angleton, the longtime counterintelligence chief, a dismissal related in turn to the aforementioned treatment of the Soviet defector and to the argument as to whether Mr. Angleton was right or

wrong in his treatment of the man and in his persistent suspicion that the man was not a defector but a plant.

By the time the Reagan administration came to power, Mr. Angleton was gone, but the hard-liners on the transition team took up his cause. They are still at it. They maintain that CIA's counterintelligence has been greatly weakened and that the agency as a result may be penetrated.

They got a lot of ammunition recently with the discovery that Edward Lee Howard, a CIA agent trained for a job in Moscow, was in fact a Soviet spy. They got more ammunition with the discovery that Howard had been made privy to U.S. sources in the Soviet Union and that he had revealed at least one of these sources, leading to the arrest of electronics expert A.G. Tolkahev.

More still when Howard, said to have been identified by Mr. Yurchenko, was able to slip surveillance and escape the country.

Now they have the escape of Mr. Yurchenko himself.

So there is trouble ahead. Heads will roll. Bill Casey may be too close to Ronald Reagan to be in grave danger of losing his job. But there are other targets, including Mr. Casey's deputy, William McMahon. Mr. McMahon and others must be asking themselves today where they went wrong and how they went wrong and how they may be able to earn a living outside "the firm."

Tom Braden is a nationally syndicated columnist.